

Appl. No. 09/574,909
 Audit. dated 10/15/2003
 Reply to Office Action of 07/15/2003

AMENDMENT

Amendment to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

Please amend claims 1-11, 13-15, 17-18, 22, 27-28, 30-32, 37-46, 50 and 55 as follows, without prejudice.

Please cancel claims 12, 16, 19-21, 23-26, 29, 33-36, 47-49, 51-54 and 56-61, without prejudice.

Please add claims 62-70.

- al
- 1 1. (Currently amended) A method comprising:
 - 2 establishing a database of pre-screened home service providers;
 - 3 extracting a description of a consumer's service needs using a [[interactive
 - 4 questions]] question and answer [[interviews]] interview appropriate for the consumer's
 - 5 desired home service task;
 - 6 packaging and presenting the consumer's service needs to [[multiple]] one or
 - 7 more home service providers in the database of pre-screened home service providers that
 - 8 [[inact]] exhibit a set of predetermined qualifications; and
 - 9 presenting one or more affirmative home service [[providers']] provider responses
 - 10 to the consumer after a predetermined number of responses are received.
 - 1 2. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising receiving confirmation
 - 2 of completed service transactions by initiating automatic follow-up communication with
 - 3 one or more of the consumer and the home service providers.

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- 1 3. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, ~~further comprising wherein the establishing~~
2 ~~a database of service providers further includes screening service providers by:~~
3 ~~making inferences regarding desirability of a particular home service task to home~~
4 ~~service providers based upon [[the]] past service requests to which the home service~~
5 ~~providers have responded or not responded[[data provided]]]; and~~
6 ~~prioritizing referral of home service providers based upon [[the number of~~
7 ~~recently received]] recent service opportunities provided to or accepted by the home~~
8 ~~service providers.~~
- 1 4. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the home service providers are
2 pre-screened based on [[the]] information they provide, [[such as]] including one or more
3 of service type, geographic region of operation, service response and fulfillment time,
4 preferred communication mechanism and [[the]] types of transaction services for which
5 they would like to be considered.
- 1 5. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 compiling [[quantitative]] ratings and [[qualitative]] reviews regarding [[a]] the
3 home service [[provider]] providers that have completed [[involved during a]] one or
4 more service [[transaction]] transactions on behalf of one or more matched consumers
5 and have been rated and reviewed by the one or more matched consumers;
6 assigning a rating score to the home service providers based on the ratings and
7 reviews;
8 assigning a quality seal to the home service [[provider]] providers based on the
9 [[quantitative]] ratings and [[qualitative]] reviews received from the consumers; and
10 presenting the quality seal associated with a particular home service provider
11 when subjective information regarding the particular home service provider is requested
12 by a consumer.

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- 1 6. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the [[interactive interviews allow
2 consumers]] question and answer interview allows the consumer to narrow [[the]]
3 alternatives that describe the consumer's service [[need,]] needs while [[the indications or
4 choices]] selections by the consumer lead them to a new set of alternatives and choices.
- 1 7. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the [[consumer]] consumer's
2 service needs may be presented to the one or more home service providers, by way of a
3 set of heterogeneous communication devices depending upon preferences supplied by the
4 one or more home service providers.
- 1 8. (Currently amended) The method of claim 7, wherein the set of heterogeneous
2 communication devices includes one or more of facsimile, pager, mobile phone, home
3 phone, office phone, wireless internet device, Interactive Voice Response (IVR) unit, cell
4 text messaging and email.
- 1 9. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the one or more home service
2 providers may choose to submit a quote for the consumer's service needs, [[indicate]]
3 indicating a desire to be [[referred]] presented to the consumer, or reject the home service
4 task.
- 1 10. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the consumer after receiving
2 responses from the one or more home service [[providers' responses]] providers may then
3 select from the [[pre-qualified]] one or more home service providers based at least in part
4 upon one or more objective and/or subjective factors ratings associated with the one or
5 more home [[pre-qualified]] service providers.
- 1 11. (Currently amended) The method of claim 10, wherein the objective and subjective
2 factors may be ratings are collected from consumers that have hired the one or more

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3 home service providers for one or more particular home service tasks by the system and
 4 presented to the consumer along with the service provider responses, and [[a]] are stored
 5 in the database of [[consumer-generated]] pre-screened home service providers [[provider
 6 ratings and/or reviews]].

12. (Canceled)

1 13. (Currently amended) The method of claim [[12]] 1, further comprising:
 2 capturing basic information [[on]] regarding the home service providers;
 3 collecting [[additional]] preference information from the home service providers
 4 to support the most effective CSR-Matching Process facilitate matching among
 5 consumers and the home service providers. [;]
 6 creating a unique service provider profile for each service provider;
 7 providing service providers the option of personalizing the website home page to
 8 meet their specific preferences;
 9 notifying service providers of projects that have been submitted to the service for
 10 which the service provider is eligible;
 11 ----- recognizing service providers upon return to their site.

1 14. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 13, wherein the basic information includes
 2 one or more of business name, address, number of years in operation, number of
 3 employees, one or more service interests, and credit information.

1 15. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 13, wherein the preference information
 2 includes one or more of one or more service types, geographic region of operation,
 3 service expenditure size range, service response and fulfillment time, and [[a]] one or
 4 more preferred communication [[mechanism]] mechanisms.

16. (Canceled)

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1 17. (Currently amended) The method of claim [[16]] 13, wherein the preference information
2 further includes the type of [[CSRs]] consumer service requests that the home service
3 providers are interested in receiving [[seeing, such as quotes versus referrals]].

1 18. (Currently amended) The method of claim [[16]] 15, wherein the preferred
2 communication mechanism [[may be]] comprises one or more of facsimile, a pager,
3 mobile phone, home phone, office phone[[automated telephone]], wireless internet
4 device, Interactive Voice Response (IVR) [[database]] unit, cell text messaging[[
5 facsimile]] and e-mail.

19-21. (Canceled)

22. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein [[the Pre-Qualification Process]] a
2 prescreening process for the home service providers includes one or more of:
3 reviewing objective criteria and capturing relevant information in [[the]] a home
4 service provider profile;
5 checking licensing status;
6 checking insurance coverage status;
7 checking business credit status;
8 submitting a request for licensing confirmation to the relevant licensing body;
9 submitting a request for insurance coverage confirmation to the relevant insurance
10 company indicated through the SPHP and resident in the service provider profile;
11 submitting a request for business credit status to one or more third-party agencies
12 based on information resident in the service provider profile;
13 submitting a request for legal and bankruptcy review to [[the relevant state's]] an
14 Attorney General's Office or third-party information service bureau based on information
15 [[resident]] in the home service provider profile;

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16 submitting a request to ~~[[the relevant]]~~ an agency or group, that ~~[[capture]]~~
 17 ~~captures~~ negative ~~[[information based]]~~ consumer feedback~~[[,]]~~ based on information
 18 ~~[[resident]]~~ in the home service provider profile; and
 19 ~~[[contacting]]~~ checking references~~[[, when required from]]~~ of the home service
 20 ~~providers; via email, physical mail or telephone and questioned regarding the~~
 21 ~~performance of a specific service provider.~~

23-26. (Canceled)

27. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising~~[[:]]~~ receiving
 confirmation from the consumer regarding ~~[[consumers confirming]]~~ completion of a
 service transaction ~~[[based on a CSR]]~~ with one of the home service providers; and
 service providers confirming the completion of a service transaction, ~~once the~~
 consumer has already confirmed consummation of the service transaction;

28. (Currently amended) The method of claim 27, further comprising~~[[:]]~~ receiving feedback
and rating and review information regarding the home service provider from the
consumer;
consumers submitting the Consumer Feedback Form and the Rating & Review
Process; and
service providers submitting the input form rating their experience with the
service for a specific service transaction;

29. (Canceled)

30. (Currently amended) A method of facilitating commerce between service providers and
 consumers comprising:
 providing a competitive environment in which consumers can select ~~[[an]]~~ one or
~~more~~ appropriate home service ~~[[provider]]~~ providers based on one or more of home

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5 service provider profiles, [[full services]] service bids, estimates, proposals, references,
 6 quotes, [[objective information]] and [[subjective]] consumer ratings and reviews relating
 7 to the home service providers;
 8 uniting consumers and home service providers by matching service needs
 9 expressed by a consumer [[needs]] to one or more of service providers' capabilities,
 10 interests and experience as indicated in the home service provider profiles and identifying
 11 appropriate and [[pre-qualified]] prescreened home service providers; and
 12 completing a full loop, by matching consumers to only those [[pre-qualified]]
 13 prescreened home service providers who have confirmed their interest in performing the
 14 [[requested]] service needs or who have otherwise expressed interest in services similar
 15 to the service needs.

1 31. (Currently amended) The method of claim 30, further comprising:
 2 guiding consumers through a [[Consumer-driven Service Request (CSR)
 3 Process]] service request generation process during, where a consumer user desiring to
 4 submit a service need for quote or referral may proceed through the CSR process, which
 5 the consumers [[describes and defines]] indicate their service [[need]] needs;[[,]] and
 6 [[packages it]] presenting the service needs in a meaningful way [[for]] to a
 7 plurality of the home service providers.

1 32. (Currently amended) The method of claim 31, wherein the [[CSR]] service request
 2 generation process [[may include]] includes a [[interactive questions]] question and
 3 answer interview[[or template process,]] which facilitates gathering of [[delivers]] a
 4 detailed description of the consumer's service [[need]] needs.

33-36. (Canceled)

1 37. (Currently amended) A method comprising:

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2 receiving an indication of a service category from a consumer;
 3 developing a detailed description of the consumer's service needs by receiving
 4 consumer input using [[interactive questions]] question and answer interviews generated
 5 by a decision tree based upon currently available information about the consumer's
 6 service needs; [[and]]
 7 enabling the consumer to [[soliciting]] one or more of receive, obtain and solicit
 8 information quotes on behalf of the consumer from a plurality of pre-screened home
 9 service providers by [[packaging]] presenting the consumer's service needs as a service
 10 request and delivering the service request to each of the plurality of pre-screened home
 11 service providers, the service request including appropriately descriptive and detailed
 12 information to enable home service providers associated with the service category to
 13 make a decision whether to accept the service request [[provide a firm quote]]; and
 14 compiling a list of pre-qualified home service providers who have confirmed their
 15 interest in meeting the consumer's service needs or who have otherwise shown interest in
 16 services similar to the consumer's service needs, by using the Intuitive Predicting
 17 Method, where making one or more inferences [[are made]] based on [[the]] past service
 18 requests to which the home [[data provided by]] service providers have responded or not
 19 responded~~[[,]]~~ and by selecting home service providers with the least number of recent
 20 service opportunities.

- 1 38. (Currently amended) The method of claim 37, further comprising:
 2 receiving consumer input relating to the consumer's service [[need]] needs; and
 3 guiding the consumer to the service category by presenting additional questions
 4 and using information gathered to cross reference a knowledge management database.
- 1 39. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 37, wherein the service request includes one
 2 or more of estimated appropriate measurements, product identifiers and desired solutions.

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- 1 40. (Currently amended) The method of claim 37, further comprising presenting the
2 consumer with an appropriate templated form for expressing the consumer's service
3 [[need]] needs.
- 1 41. (Currently amended) The method of claim 37, further comprising presenting the
2 consumer with one or more visual images~~[[, such as photos or drawings,]]~~ to facilitate
3 development of a correct service need description.
- 1 42. (Currently amended) The method of claim 37, further comprising receiving information
2 indicative of the consumer's ~~[[wherein consumers may indicate a]]~~ preferred
3 communication mechanism for use by home service providers.
- 1 43. (Currently amended) The method of claim 37, further comprising receiving information
2 indicative of a ~~[[wherein consumers may indicate]]~~ deadline for completion of ~~[[their~~
3 service need]] ~~the consumer's service needs~~.
- 1 44. (Currently amended) The method of claim 37, further comprising receiving information
2 indicative of the consumer's ~~[[wherein consumers may indicate their]]~~ preference
3 regarding ~~[[of]]~~ one or more ~~[[quantitative]]~~ rating factors, ~~[[such as]]~~ including one or
4 more of ~~timeliness, [[price]] quality, value, budget, communication, courteousness and~~
5 cleanliness.
- 1 45. (Currently amended) The method of claim 44, wherein the one or more ~~[[quantitative]]~~
2 rating factors are used to develop a composite home service provider rating for use in
3 said matching.
- 1 46. (Currently amended) A method of matching consumers and service providers
2 comprising:

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3 creating home service provider profiles based upon [[service providers
4 submitting]] (i) basic information received from a plurality of home service providers,
5 including name, address, and one or more of experience level, licensing and years in
6 operation, and (ii) preference information, including one or more of service types,
7 geographic region of operation and a preferred communication mechanism;
8 creating a unique service provider profile for each service provider;
9 receiving consumers submitting the Consumer Service Request a service request
10 from a consumer including basic information, [[such as]] including one or more of name,
11 address and location of service, and preference information, [[such as]] including one or
12 more of price, quality, value, budget, courtousness, timeliness and communication
13 mechanism;
14 creating a unique consumer profile for each consumer;
15 identifying a set of [[qualified]] prescreened home service providers of the
16 plurality of home [[from a database of]] service providers that are eligible to quote or be
17 [[referred]] matched to [[a]] the consumer based upon the [[CSR]] service request and the
18 home service provider profiles;
19 presenting the identified set of prescreened home service providers with
20 sufficiently descriptive and detailed [[consumer]] data regarding a home service task
21 associated with [[based upon]] the [[CSR]] service request so as to allow acceptance or
22 rejection of the home improvement task by the home service providers of the identified
23 set of qualified home service providers, wherein personally identifiable information
24 relating to the consumer is withheld;
25 receiving responses from a plurality of the identified set of qualified home service
26 providers acknowledging the [[CSR]] service request and confirming their interest in
27 performing the [[service]] home improvement task; and

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28 providing the consumer's contact information only to a first predetermined
 29 number of the plurality of the identified set of qualified home service providers from
 30 whom responses are received,
 31 service providers responding with quote or referral, based on the information
 32 included in the CSR;
 33 compiling a list of pre-qualified service providers who have confirmed their
 34 interest in meeting the consumer's service needs, by using the Intuitive Predicting
 35 Method, where inferences are made based on the past data provided by service providers;
 36 modifying the list of service providers, by selecting service providers with the
 37 least number of recent service opportunities;
 38 consumers receiving a communication from commerce facilitator, confirming
 39 receipt and summarizing the CSR, using the preferred communication mechanism; and
 40 consumers receiving the list of service providers, who have confirmed their
 41 interest in performing the service, with requested quotes or referrals.

47-49. (Canceled)

1 50. (Currently amended) The method of claim 46, wherein the [[CSRs are]] service request
 2 is matched against the [[appropriate]] home service provider profiles, using information
 3 components within the service provider profile, as key matching components.

51-54. (Canceled)

1 55. (Currently amended) The method of claim 46, further comprising presenting
 2 [[consumers]] the consumer with information regarding the first predetermined number
 3 of the plurality of the identified set of qualified home service providers from whom
 4 responses are received; results, upon completion of Service Provider Response Process,
 5 using their preferred communication mechanism.

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56-61. (Canceled)

62. (New) A method comprising:

extracting a description of a consumer's home service needs using an interview appropriate for the consumer's home service task;

allowing a plurality of home service providers that meet a set of predetermined qualifications to review the consumer's service needs by packaging the consumer's service needs as a service request and presenting the service request to the plurality of home service providers without providing personally identifiable information relating to the consumer; and

providing the consumer's contact information only to a first predetermined number of the plurality of home service providers that accept the service request.

63. (New) The method of claim 62, further comprising notifying the consumer as acceptances from the plurality of home service providers are received.

64. (New) The method of claim 62, further comprising after receiving acceptances from the first predetermined number of the plurality of home service providers, notifying the consumer that the first predetermined number of the plurality of home service providers have expressed interest in the consumer's service needs.

65. (New) The method of claim 62, further comprising allowing the consumer to view information pertaining to the first predetermined number of the plurality of home service providers.

66. (New) The method of claim 65, wherein a graphical representation of the consumer rating information is presented to the consumer in the form of a star system.

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1 67. (New) The method of claim 62, wherein the set of predetermined qualifications include
2 one or more of types of service transactions for which the plurality of home service
3 providers have expressed interest, geographic region of operation of the plurality of home
4 service providers, licensing and desired fulfillment time category of the plurality of home
5 service providers.

1 68. (New) The method of claim 62, further comprising after completion of the consumer's
2 service needs by a home service provider of the first predetermined number of the
3 plurality of home service providers, collecting feedback from the consumer regarding the
4 home service provider for inclusion into consumer rating information associated with the
5 home service provider.

1 69. (New) The method of claim 65, wherein the information pertaining to the first
2 predetermined number of the plurality of home service providers comprises consumer
3 rating information collected from one or more other consumers for whom the first
4 predetermined number of the plurality of home service providers have completed home
5 services.

1 70. (New) The method of claim 62, further comprising after completion of the consumer's
2 service needs, collecting feedback from the consumer regarding reasons for not selecting
3 particular home service providers of the first predetermined number of the plurality of
4 home service providers and making the feedback available to the first predetermined
5 number of the plurality of home service providers.

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